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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended):      ~~A system~~ An apparatus comprising:  
a ~~first network interconnect device to couple to a network;~~  
a second network interconnect device comprising an uplink port and a device port and to be coupled via the uplink port and a first channel to a first network interconnect device that is to couple to a network, and to receive; a channel coupling the uplink port to the first network interconnect device, wherein the first network interconnect device is operative to transmit a predetermined signal [[to]] from the second first network interconnect device, the signal operative to control a state of the PHY a physical layer (PHY) of a data terminal equipment (DTE) device coupled to the second network interconnect device via the device port and a second channel, wherein the DTE device is a backup device to be connected/disconnected from the network without manual intervention via the PHY state control the second network interconnect device.

Claim 2 (currently amended):      ~~A system~~ An apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein the predetermined signal is to control a controls the power state of the a PHY of the second network interconnect device.

Claim 3 (currently amended):      ~~A system~~ An apparatus as defined in claim 2, wherein the predetermined signal is a heartbeat pulse.

Claim 4 (currently amended):      ~~A system~~ An apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein the second network interconnect device is a hub.

Claims 5 - 7 (cancel)

Claim 8 (currently amended): ~~A system~~ An apparatus as defined in claim 4, wherein the predetermined signal is to control a ~~controls the~~ power state of the a PHY layer of the hub.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A method comprising;  
coupling a master network interconnect device to a network;  
coupling a slave network interconnect device to the master network interconnect device via a first channel;  
coupling the slave network interconnect device to a network device via a second channel;  
and  
transmitting a predetermined signal from the master network interconnect device to the slave network interconnect device so as to cause the slave network interconnect device to transmit a signal via the second channel to control a state of the PHY a physical layer (PHY) of the network device that is coupled to the slave network interconnect device.

Claim 10 (currently amended): A method as defined in claim 9, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal from the master network interconnect device to the slave network interconnect device is effective to control ~~the~~ a power state of the PHY of the network device.

Claim 11 (currently amended): A method as defined in claim 9, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal from the master network interconnect device to the slave network interconnect device is caused to occur under program control of the master network interconnect device and to control the PHY of the network device via the program control.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A method as defined in claim 11, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal from the master network interconnect device to the slave network interconnect device is effective to control ~~the~~ a power state of the PHY of the network device.

Claim 13 (original): A method as defined in claim 12, wherein the predetermined signal is a heartbeat signal.

Claim 14 (original): A method as defined in claim 9, wherein the slave network interconnect device comprises a hub having an uplink port to couple to the master network interconnect device and having at least one device port to couple to a network device.

Claim 15 (original): A method as defined in claim 14, wherein the master network interconnect device transmits the predetermined signal to the hub over a transmission channel that couples the master network interconnect device to the uplink port of the hub.

Claim 16 (original): A method as defined in claim 15, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal from the master network interconnect device to the slave network interconnect device is caused to occur under program control.

Claim 17 (original): A method as defined in claim 16, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal from the master network interconnect device to the slave network interconnect device is effective to control the power state of the PHY of the network device.

Claim 18 (original): A method as defined in claim 17, wherein the predetermined signal is a heartbeat signal.

Claim 19 (original): ~~In a network, an~~ An interconnect apparatus comprising:  
a network interconnect device to couple to a network and[(:)] to a first hub, the first hub  
comprising a plurality of device ports and an uplink port[(:)], via a first channel that is to couple  
coupling the uplink port of the first hub to the network interconnect device[(:)], wherein a first  
network device is to couple coupled to a first device port of the first hub via a second channel,  
and wherein a concatenated hub comprising a plurality of device ports and an uplink port is to  
couple to a second device port of the first hub via a third channel, and a second network device is

to couple to a device port of the concatenated hub via a fourth channel, wherein the and network interconnect device includes an article including a machine-readable storage medium onto which there are written instructions that, if executed by the network interconnect device, are effective to cause the network interconnect device to transmit a predetermined signal over the first channel to the first hub so as to cause the first hub to transmit a signal via the second channel and the third channel to control a state of a physical layer (PHY) of the first the PHY of a network device that is coupled to a device port of the hub and a state of a PHY of the second network device to connect/disconnect the first and second network devices to/from the network.

Claim 20 (cancel)

Claim 21 (currently amended): An interconnect apparatus as defined in claim 19, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal is effective to control the a power state of the PHY of the first network device.

Claim 22 (original): An interconnect apparatus as defined in claim 21, wherein the predetermined signal is a heartbeat signal.

Claim 23 (cancel)

Claim 24 (currently amended): An interconnect apparatus as defined in claim [[23]] 19, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal over the first channel to the first hub is effective to ~~connection~~ connect/disconnect the second network device to/from the network.

Claim 25 (currently amended): An interconnect apparatus as defined in claim 24, wherein transmission of the predetermined signal is effective to control the a power state of the PHY of the second network device.

Claim 26 (currently amended): An interconnect apparatus as defined in claim [[23]] 19, wherein the predetermined signal is a heartbeat signal.

Claims 27 – 30 (cancel)

Claim 31 (new): The system of claim 1, wherein the second network interconnect device is to transmit a first signal to the DTE equipment responsive to the predetermined signal to cause the DTE equipment to be disconnected from the network.

Claim 32 (new): The system of claim 31, wherein the second network interconnect device is to transmit a second signal to the DTE equipment responsive to the predetermined signal to cause the DTE equipment to be connected to the network.

Claim 33 (new): The system of claim 31, wherein the second network interconnect device is to transmit the first signal to a third network interconnect device coupled to the second network interconnect device via a third channel to cause a second DTE equipment to be disconnected from the network, the third network interconnect device coupled to the DTE equipment via a fourth channel.